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ABSTRACT

The limits and boundaries of anthropology are briefly discussed, along with a general description of lay attitudes towards the field. A research case is given to illustrate the way in which anthropological study methods can contribute to educational research. Noted among these contributions is an informed distrust that anthropologists exhibit towards statements concerning "universal" human traits and a professional suspicion about educators' preoccupation with "intrinsic" merits of standard educational operating procedures and policies. (Author/LH)

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PATTERNS OF SOPHISTICATION AND NAIVETY
SOME FEATURES OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACHES
TO THE STUDY OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

The limits and boundaries of anthropology are discussed briefly, then a general definition of people's perceptions of anthropology is arrived at by an examination of three things: (1) anthropology college course descriptions, (2) some words people use to introduce anthropologists, and (3) some of the ways in which anthropology deals with complex, practical, educational problems.

A research case is given to illustrate the contributions anthropology can make to research on education. These contributions include a learned distrust of statements about "universal" human traits and a learned agnosticism about the intrinsic merits and necessity of standard operating procedures.

PATTERNS OF SOPHISTICATION AND NAIVETY: SOME FEATURES OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF EDUCATION [1,2]

Frederick Erickson[3]

Defining Anthropology

Max Gluckman (1964), in Closed Systems and Open Minds: The Limits of Naivety in Social Anthropology, states that in any discipline, it is necessary to think in differentiated ways about some aspects of phenomena and in relatively undifferentiated ways about other aspects. The greater the complexity of the phenomena under investigation, the more striking will be the contrast within and across disciplines regarding which aspects of phenomena are handled in sophisticated ways, and which are handled naively. A studied naivety -- a deliberate crudity -- is necessary in the various social sciences, Gluckman argues, because of the tremendous complexity of the phenomena with which they are concerned. An attempt to study everything about everything in social life would be immobilizing, and so scientific progress in any discipline requires that it purchase wisdom about some things at the price of foolishness about other things. The best anthropologists can hope, he says, is to be studiedly naive: aware of the soft spots in the discipline, cultivating a sense of the limits and boundaries of a given disciplinary mode of inquiry.

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[1]Presented at the symposium on "Values Imposed by Anthropology: Implications for Educational Research and Development" at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, 1979.

[2]The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance provided by conversations with James Fitting, Lee Shulman, Robert Floden, Perry Lanier, and Albert Robillard.

[3]Frederick Erickson is a senior researcher in the IRT and an MSU professor of education and medicine.

That argument is a bit too neat; it can be read as an apology for the current status quo in any discipline. I want to argue here that while there are inevitable differences in pattern across the social sciences -- variation from one discipline to the next in the texture of wisdom and foolishness -- it is currently necessary to be less naive about what one's own discipline is worst at and more open at the boundaries between disciplines, if anything like a unified understanding of human social life is ever to be reached. It is this unified understanding that anthropology rather arrogantly claims as its own project. To the extent that the claim is anything more than rhetoric, then anthropology is not so much a discipline (with an inherent pattern of clarity and fuzziness of focus) as it is a problem-oriented field of inquiry, eclectic in substance and in method, with the potential to be fuzzy and clear about whatever it needs to be to address the problems at hand.

The field of anthropology emerged, not at all coincidentally, in the period of the most rapid expansion of the European and American colonial empires. Margaret Mead once said that to understand the boundaries among the social sciences one should think of the current map of Africa. She said the boundaries among these new nations are entirely irrational, simply the remains of lines of struggle among colonial powers.

Neither England, France, nor Germany ever succeeded at fully doing in the other two great powers, and thus each of the three great colonial empires of the nineteenth century had limits. So, too, do the various social sciences. It is useful to think of their boundaries as limits of naivety. And if Gluckman is at least partly right, had anthropology succeeded in its drive for intellectual *lebensraum* and for territory within universities -- had it gotten exclusive rights to its most imperialistic central question, "What is *anthropos*?" -- then there would

be nothing to discuss in this paper, because there would be everything to discuss. So anthropology can thank the university departments of psychology, sociology, political science, economics, and even history for preventing it from getting all the territory it claimed in the nineteenth century in its attempt to become the overarching discipline within which all the other social sciences would be included.

Even today, anthropology keeps pressing its imperial claims; it persists in trying to answer the question "What is man?" In consequence, as a deliberately broadly ranging field of inquiry, anthropology is difficult to characterize. There are as many anthropologies as there are aspects of *anthropos* Some areas of focus, however, are relatively distinctive.

I have taken three approaches in trying to highlight the distinctive. First, I read through the descriptions of all the courses in anthropology offered at my university. Second, I thought of what people had said recently while introducing me as an anthropologist. Third, I considered some practical problems in the field of education -- inherently complex problems -- and tried to think of which aspects of those problems anthropologists might tend to be relatively wise and foolish about, in contrast to scholars from other disciplines.

Anthropology Described at the University

Here are excerpts from two descriptions of introductory anthropology courses:

> Anthropology 100. Origin of Man and Culture
>
> This course provides an introductory overview of the processes which shaped contemporary Homo sapiens. Major topics to be covered include: the nature of evolution and natural selection; our primate ancestors and contemporary primates; the evolution of the human species; relationships between environment, technology, and biological evolution; and natural selection today.

Anthropology 171. Introduction to Sociocultural Anthropology

This course is intended to present an overview of sociocultural anthropology for the beginning student. Course topics will include anthropological approaches to the study of kinship, law, politics, social networks, and systems of belief. Lectures, readings, and films for the course will draw upon examples from a variety of societies around the world, each of which reveals a different way of being human.

Each of Which Reveals a Different Way of Being Human. In anthropology the question "What is man?" is handled a bit like the question in the classic, awful joke:

Q: How's your wife?

A: In comparison to what?

When I read the course descriptions I think first of differing skull fragments, customs, and artifacts whose uses I am not sure of. There is an emphasis on contrast across the (possibly) four and a half million-year history of human evolution, and across the full spectrum of societies which exist today, not to mention contemporary groups of primates and dolphins. "What is man?" is asked as "What is man in contrast to other animals, and in contrast to other men past and present?" These are key dimensions of contrast.

Other dimensions along which questions of contrast could be asked are not considered empirically legitimate. The question "What is man in contrast to God?" is not asked, nor is the question usually asked, "What is man in contrast to what he might be?" There is an emphasis on careful empirical description and comparison, organized according to principles of contrastive analysis.

There is also an emphasis on adaptation, not only in physical anthropology and archaeology, but among the current generation of senior anthropologists, within sociocultural anthropology as well. The organization of human living -- biologically, socially, culturally --

is seen as actively adaptive (interaction among the individual organism, the human group, and the nonhuman environment, all of which are constantly changing in states and in relationships, although that change is not necessarily rapid or uniform in character).

Human learning is seen as one of the essential integuments of human biocultural adaptation and, in distinction to psychology, the primary nexus of learning is not seen as that between the individual organism and its environmental surroundings, but between the human collectivity, of whatever scale, and its social and physical environment. The nexus of learning between the individual human organism and its immediate environment is considered secondary for this reason: The capacity of human collectivities to learn adaptively in response to changing social and physical environmental circumstances, and in acting on those environments in ways that change them, is seen as the most essential aspect of being human; the biocultural specialization of a physiologically unspecialized species (with the exception of the forebrain and the hand). Human groups are seen as actively "learning," and possessing to a unique degree the capacity to share and transmit learning among individual learners, within and across generations.

So contrast, adaptation, and human collectivities are of central interest. These three are related, for it is *contrast in modes of collective adaptation* which is being investigated -- kinds of dynamic relations among individuals, groups, and their environments, including the content of the symbol systems shared among group members. Within the field of anthropology as a whole, precise location of classificatory *differentia* among human collectivities and their ways of life, past and present, is a focal concern.

Contrastive analysis is accomplished in anthropology by a discipline-

specific way of handling the disciplinarily universal distinction between the particular and the general. *Particularization* takes at least three forms in the way phenomena are considered:

1. Concreteness. Whether bones, customs, or artifacts are being considered, there is a literalness involved; what is salient are things and actions that can be observed to exist in space and time.

2. Case specificity. There is an emphasis on the "naturally" bounded unit of analysis -- this skull, this subspecies of early man, this village, this child-rearing pattern, this politeness display.

3. Minuteness of detail. In the description of particular objects, events, and sets of circumstances, the level of detail sought is that necessary to account for all the salient differentia.

Generalization in anthropology has at least two aspects:

1. Holism. There is interest in generalization within cases as well as across them, searching out all the ramifications within a case of a given pattern, ramifications both in the sense of breadth of distribution of occurrence, and of frequency of occurrence.

2. Contrast and comparison. Patterns found ramified within any given whole case are considered against a backdrop of wide variation, across space and time, in "ways of being human".

Attendant in these two aproaches to generalization is an emphasis on *recurrence* of phenomena; unique or infrequent events, objects or types of people are not of great interest. Attendant also is an emphasis on the *exotic and distinctive*; to do the most powerful contrastive analysis the widest possible range of variation and contrast is desirable as a frame. This means searching for the extremes -- the earliest skull, the everyday customs most different from those of the investigator.

The Layperson's Perception of Anthropology

Recently I began to teach medical students for the first time in a sustained way by going on morning rounds with them at a local hospital. On the first morning I was introduced to the students by my fellow teacher, an attending physician I had not met before. We

gathered in a small room, and just as we had settled down at the conference table, the physician introduced me: "This is Dr. Erickson. He's an anthropologist, but he's done a lot of other things besides that."

One morning a few days later, before rounds had started, I was standing at the nurse's station talking to a hospital social worker whom I had met the day before. After we had talked about how she got into doing medical social work, she got a half quizzical look on her face, hesitated, and said, "What is your specialty in anthropology?" I said, "I guess you could call it urban anthropology." Instantly her face changed and she said "Oh!" with what I thought was a note of comprehension mixed with relief.

What was going on in these two little scenes here is not entirely clear to me, but things like that have happened before. Hearing the term anthropology, or reading the course descriptions cited earlier in this paper, seems instantly to conjure up some or all of the following images: skull fragments, potshards, bloody initiation rites, unintelligible languages, naked genitalia, and roasting pigs. None of the above seem to have much to do with a hospital ward in an American city or with the public school down the street.

Paradoxically, anthropology may be a victim of its own success in public relations. The exotic attracts attention; the *form* of anthropology's interest in the exotic is instantly communicable to and interpretable by the lay audience. What is much more difficult to communicate, outside the doors of a university classroom, is the *content* of that interest in the exotic, the inherent concern of the discipline for contrastive analysis as a means of answering the question, "What is man?" Socialization into the discipline is required before that question

seems more than pointless, seems possible to answer, and before contrastive analysis begins to seem significant as a means of answering that question. What is of the essence is the content of the concern for contrast as a mode of knowing; the form of exotic data is epiphenomenal.

Yet the lay audience takes the form literally as the phenomenon of interest rather than as an epiphenomenon. And the problem is that while exotic data may attract a certain amount of instant attention when taken literally, that interest is only fleeting, especially for people engaged in practical affairs in a modern society. Much of the information of anthropological research comes across to such people as having perhaps some intrinsic interest in its own right. But aside from that, such information comes across as "footnotes" which are of no relevance to the conduct of practical affairs.

What do prehistoric skull fragments and contemporary pig roasts -- or inferences about human physical and social life drawn from such data -- have to do with the practical business of keeping school and teaching children, or fixing them up at the hospital when they get sick? "A great deal," an anthropologist might want to say. But in order for the practitioner to understand the relevance of what the anthropologist wants to say, the practitioner would have to sit still while the anthropologist first explained the difference between the form and content of anthropological inquiry. That takes time, which practitioners may not think they have. It also takes a capacity for sensitive and rapid translation and teaching, which the anthropologist may not possess. One of the aspects of naivety acquired in the process of being socialized into a specialized field of reflective study and/or practice is learning not to recognize what the non-specialist does not know about the specialty.

In becoming a specialist, one so takes for granted the fundamental assumptions of the specialty that they may become transparent, held out of awareness, as is the knowledge of the grammars of the languages one has learned to speak fluently. Or the fundamental assumptions may stay within awareness and come to seem so important to the specialist that he or she can talk about them for hours, weeks, university terms, doctoral programs, whole professional careers. The non-specialist does not have that kind of motivation, or that kind of time.

The reputation gained from general public relations may not be the only source of an identification problem for anthropology. The restricted scope of the university catalogue as an advertising medium also projects an image of anthropology as mainly concerned with the exotic -- far from here and now -- and as mainly operating at the (ostensibly) "primitive" stages of scientific inquiry, those of description and classification, rather than having passed on to the (ostensibly) more "advanced" states of prediction, control, and general theory construction.

And at the most micro level, the reputation of anthropology is contributed to by the stylistic display of the faculty member and graduate student. How many scholars of North American Indians are there who wear some small item of Indian adornment on their person? And how many anthropologists have a rug and a ceramic item displayed in their offices? I have a Navaho rug on my wall, and an Ethiopian pot on my bookshelf. I also have a telephone, but that does not seem to get any points as a cultural artifact. This point system is one aspect of the professional subculture.

Paradoxically, anthropologists seem perplexed about the apparent inability or unwillingness of lay people, especially those engaged in practical affairs to get interested in the anthropologist's stories of exotic

occurrences, past and present. The anthropologist may blame the practitioner for being anti-intellectual. Both the anthropologist's and the practitioner's frustrations with one another make sense in terms of the differences in their points of view.

Yet becoming reflective by a process of contrastive analysis about other people's points of view, within the context of which their behavior makes sense, is part of the anthropologist's stock in trade. Even in modern anthropological archeology, as well as in ethnographic fieldwork, trying to figure out some aspects of a community's patterns of intentions, as well as reporting evidence of its members' behavior, is inherent in the research enterprise. Anthropologists, if their own disciplinary claims are valid, ought to be better than other social researchers at understanding how practitioners' perceptions of the anthropologist make sense. The injunction to the physician, "Heal thyself," might be stated in different terms for the anthropologist as "Become aware of your own professional ethnocentrism and studied naivety."

If one can get past the form/content confusion in dealing with the exotic, then one of the most useful things anthropologists may have to offer the practitioner is their learned distrust of the validity of statements about "universal" traits of human individuals and groups.

Another thing the anthropologist may have to offer is a learned agnosticism about the intrinsic merits and necessity of standard operating procedures. Professionally socialized into knowledge of (ideally) the "full range" of human diversity, the anthropologist ought to be able continually to imagine alternative possibilities, other ways of doing what needs to be done, other definitions of what ought to be done. Looking at any familiar event in his or her own society, the

anthropologist as professional alien can say, "I wonder why this is happening this way and not some other?" (Erickson, 1973, p. 16). Sharing that alienated viewpoint too continually with a practitioner can be a nuisance, and the anthropologist needs to be sensitive to that. It can also be dangerous, as the example of Socrates suggests. But anthropological training and experience can be a good base on which to adopt the critical stance of the social philosopher.

Yet another thing the anthropologist has to offer the practitioner is the insight that systematic variation in points of view and ways of behaving among individuals and groups within an institutional setting is the nature of things in a complex modern society. This variation relates to patterns of belief and action which are defined as normal and adaptive in everyday life outside the institution, even though they may be defined as deviant and troublesome within the institution.

Practical Problems in Education: A Case in Point.

I will illustrate some of the benefits, costs, and inherent limitations in three facets of a relativistic perspective on ordinary happenings in a formal organiztion with the following example of educational practice.

There is evidence that in some neighborhood elementary schools of a large American city, children do considerably less well in school (as indicated both by achievement test scores and staff reports) than do children in schools in other neighborhoods. Some of these schools are located in neighborhoods in which most of the residents are of working class Mexican-American ancestry. An anthropologist is hired to answer the question posed by school officials and by concerned residents of these neighborhoods: "Why do these children do so much less well in school than their upper middle class Anglo counterparts?"

The anthropologist might begin by saying, "That's not a question I feel comfortable in trying to answer. Before answering that we need much more information about particular circumstances. I would rather go to a few schools and ask the question first, 'What's going on here? What's the social structure and the pattern of social networks? What's the cultural organization of social relationships in a variety of scenes of everyday life, inside and outside school?'"

Depending on the anthropologist's orientation he or she might want to make the most of contrast by studying an Anglo school community and a Mexican-American one simultaneously. Or the anthropologist might start by focusing on just one Mexican-American school community. In either case, the fundamental unit of analysis would most likely be the school community rather than the classroom or an individual teacher or child. There would be interest in the issue of teaching and learning throughout that school community -- on the content and process of teaching and learning by parents and children and among siblings at home, and by the peer group on the corner, as well as by the teacher and students in the classroom. If the anthropologist had his or her druthers, this would be the range of inquiry (Heath, in press). On the assumption that most people in the school community are multicultural (Goodenough, 1971, 1976), the desire would be to see both students *and their teachers* in as wide a variety of social circumstances as possible, across as broad a range of variation as possible in the cultural organization of social relationships in face to face interaction.

Firsthand observation is likely to be the preferred mode of documenting all this. Unlike the historian, the fieldworker would be producing his or her own documentary record, writing and rewriting copious fieldnotes (Wax & Wax, Note 1). Other documentary records might be

collected across a variety of sources of written public information, such as census data, community newspapers, newsletters, meeting notices, and the like. An additional source of documentary evidence might be audiovisual records -- films or videotapes -- which could provide material for highly focused "microethnographic" analysis (Erickson, 1976), the interpretation of which would depend on the wider context of participation by the fieldworker.

Emphasis would be on discovering the "webs of meaning" that people in the scene construct for themselves (Weber, 1922; Geertz, 1973, pp. 5 and 12), interpreting behavior from the members' points of view (Frake, 1964), and identifying distinctive features of contrast which are salient for them (Erickson, 1977, Hymes, 1977).

There are several possible results of such an inquiry. If the two-site comparison model were used to do an "ethnography of learning" across communities, one finding might be that there was considerable difference in the pattern of distribution of "academic" teaching across the two sites. In the upper middle class Anglo school community, considerable academic instruction might be conducted outside school, as well as inside it, by parents as well as by teachers. In the working class Mexican-American school community, most academic teaching might be found in school with the classroom teacher as the instructor, while the academic teaching outside school might be more likely to be done by older siblings than parents. If in both school communities academic instruction of children in school by other children was regarded as "disruption" or evan as "cheating," one could roughly estimate that the Mexican-American children were likely to receive much less academic instruction than their Anglo counterparts because their preferred mode of learning -- collaboration with other students rather than instruction directly by an adult teacher -- was not allowed for in the classroom organization

of the Anglo teacher.

It might also be that in the Mexican-American community greater cultural difference exists between home and school -- Spanish may be spoken as the first language at home, and ways of using the language in speaking to accomplish social ends (Hymes, 1972, 1974) might differ from those which are customary at school. The neighborhood and the classroom might be the sites of differing speech communities (Gumperz, 1968), in which everyday interaction is organized according to differing patterns of communicative norms -- differing participation structures (Hymes, 1972; Philips, 1972; Shultz, Florio, & Erickson, in press). Value patterns might differ between home and school.

What could all this reveal about why one set of children is not doing well in school? What is the contribution of anthropology's disciplinary sophistications to some answers to that question, and what do anthropology's various naiveties lead the anthropologist to leave out, or handle in crudely undifferentiated ways?

Some Implications

The discovery of gross differences in amounts of academic instruction received by children in life inside and outside school in the two communities could well be significant. That would be a confounding variable very likely to be left out of a study that tried to address the issue of the children's low school performance through some measurement of the cognitive or motivational states of individual children, or in a study that attempted to compare the behavior of Anglo and Latino children in the classroom setting only, by such yardsticks as observer judgments of amounts of "time on task" or "time in interaction with the teacher" spent by both types of children.

Similarly, findings of cultural mismatch in expectations for how one ought to interact with others could point to sources of interactional trouble which inhibit children's learning and increase teachers' frustrations in dealing with them in the classroom. Social and cultural factors (especially subtle ones) which affect children's learning and the manifestation of their learning in school work and standardized test performance are precisely the factors often left out of more traditional designs in educational research (Schwille & Porter, Note 2).

Still, information of the kind hypothetically portrayed in the previous paragraphs does not tell nearly the whole story in so complex a matter as that of a pattern of low school achievement by a whole group of students. Even that part of the story which is told may not adequately explain school failure. One reason is that school failure is measured by the school with the individual child as the unit of analysis, rather than the social category or group to which that child belongs. To claim that either outside-school instruction or inside-school intercultural interference explains failure, the data must be aggregated with the child as the unit of analysis. This is not the form that narrative description usually takes in reports of fieldwork, and given the emphasis in anthropology on the social aggregate as the learning unit, most anthropologically trained fieldworkers would be unlikely to collect data for each child on an individual basis. Potentially, something like that could be done, but it would be quite different from the usual sort of fieldwork. The anthropological emphasis on breadth in descriptive accounts -- on scope at the expense of specificity -- tends to leave the individual out of the picture unless, somehow, there are changes in the way such holism is construed, resulting in changes in the substance and method of data collection (Erickson, Note 3).

The individual would likely be overlooked in another way as well. Given the emphasis in anthropology on external factors influencing the behavior of individuals, it is likely that internal factors -- cognitive style, developmental levels of cognitive functioning, motivation, and temperament -- might be ignored. All these are characteristics of individuals which affect their behavior and functioning, and thus are likely to explain part of the variance in the children's low school achievement. There are individual differences, there are internal states of individuals, and they need to be taken into account.

I think many anthropologists, myself included, have been too reluctant to do this, partly for a good reason. We are reacting against what we consider to be the design and conduct of much traditional educational research which has used these constructs in ways which are unsophisticatedly blind and deaf to factors of culture and social structure. Our reaction against the study of individual differences and intra-individual processes, while it may be well motivated, is an over-reaction. It makes us studiedly naive about individuals and their functioning, and while it is true that individuals do not live in isolation but in collectivities, so it is true that collectivities are composed of individuals.

Anthropological research is likely to be studiedly naive about the opposite end of the social spectrum as well -- about structure, process, and influence at the organizational level of large-scale social aggregates, beyond the level of face-to-face association, beyond the boundaries of the acquaintance network (Wax & Wax, Note 1). Social processes at state, national, and international levels of organization are usually not considered by anthropologists in nearly so sophisticated ways as are social processes on a smaller scale (within the local community or neighborhood). To the extent that life in schools is affected by such

factors, demographic and survey researchers in sociolcgy, political science, and economics may be able to account for the influence of such factors better than the classical anthropologist. Moreover, to the extent that such research is conducted according to conflict models rather than homeostatic models of social process, it can say things about what happens to children in school that anthropology often has not said.

From my reading, it seems that social class conflict and oppression have not been adequately dealt with in anthropological studies of school communities, with the exception of rare instances such as the work of Ogbu (1974, 1978). If indeed, as he argues, a lower class child of stigmatized "caste" status (e.g., Black or Latino) sees a job ceiling -- a threshold level of occupational rank beyond which only a few members of that child's own caste group pass -- that is likely to affect the child's performance in school and behavior in everyday life outside school.

Here it should be noted, however, that to make such an argument one would need evidence in which the child is the unit of analysis. Such microethnographic evidence would need to show how the child learns about the job ceiling -- specifically what that knowledge comes to mean, how its effects are expressed in everyday behavior in school by the child, and, perhaps, how the ways the child is treated in interaction with others in school communicate the message, "The job ceiling is there and it applies to you." For not all children of lower caste status fail in school, and neither the social structural explanation nor the general cultural difference explanation for school failure can account for these discrepant cases of school success. Part of the variance is left unaccounted for.

Theoretical orientation may be one reason that anthropological studies of schools have tended to be rather apolitical, although the relatively recent renewal of general interest in adaptation may change that, as social conflict is viewed as sociocultural adaptation at work. Another reason for toning down the social theory in anthropological research is more a matter of sentiment. In our research, my coworkers and I have developed close personal relationships with the administrators, teachers, and pupils we study. We are reluctant to portray members of the school staff as unwitting agents of oppression and ethnocentrism. We care about them as people, and, so as not to sound too preachy, I should also admit that we have more pragmatic concerns too -- we care about rapport with them. These are relationships of mutual trust which take time and privacy to establish. We are not uncritically fawning in our relations with informants, but we have made an ethical and scientifically substantive commitment to show how their actions and points of view make sense, and it is also in our professional interest not to jeopardize our rapport. As a consequence we may be too reluctant as social critics. That troubles me continually and, at this point, I don't know what to do about it.

Finally, another way in which anthropological studies of schools are likely to be unsophisticated relates to the emphasis on contrast as a mode of analysis and to the attendant disposition to look for the exotic -- the extreme of contrast. In the anthropological literature on schools in the United States, my reading is that there is a surprising thinness of descriptive detail and infrequency of description itself, in the portrayal of such highly ordinary cultural scenes as everyday interaction between children and teachers in classrooms and the everyday lives of principals, school board members, union officials, and state and federal

education agency personnel. A notable exception here is Wolcott's study (1973) of the everyday professional life of an elementary school principal in an ordinary school attended by white middle class children.

It may be that classrooms and principals' offices are not exotic enough sociocultural scenes for many anthropologists. I find such scenes fascinating, but I think of myself as aberrant because of it. Perhaps many fieldwork-oriented researchers would rather be out in the community. I often would, in spite of my fascination with the extremely mundane aspects of life inside formal organizations. Perhaps the rapid-fire yet so repetitively boring quality of classroom interaction is hard to sit still and attend to and think about. Informal ways people are socialized or enculturated, inside and outside schools, may be more fun to watch. Perhaps being in school at all is something the anthropologist would just as soon not do, just as the predominantly white upper middle class suburb is something the anthropologist would just as soon stay away from. Like the telephone on my desk, one gets few, if any, intra-professional points for all that. The Navaho rug does much more for the professional image and self-image.

With this emphasis on the exotic there is a real danger that subtle social and cultural differences among groups of people within communities and within schools may be overlooked by anthropologists. Paradoxically, they may in some situations overemphasize the culture factor, and in other situations in less-than-manifestly-exotic schools and communities, anthropologists may underemphasize the culture factor. Microcultures develop in every sort of face-to-face interacting group, and along all sorts of social networks in which people interact relatively frequently. These microcultures abound in complex modern societies. Admittedly, such subtle culture difference may not always make a difference -- it may not

invariably demarcate lines along which social and political boundaries are drawn (Barth, 1969, McDermott, in press). Still, the culture difference sometimes does define a boundary, as does the difference between the cut of a cheaply-made man's suit and the cut of one made by a first-class tailor. Anthropologists themselves need to understand much more clearly how this happens, to understand the ever-shifting dynamics of the micropolitics and macropolitics of subtle culture difference in complex modern societies. Laypersons can make use of such knowledge, too.

Conclusion

Educational research needs anthropology especially for what it could say about schools as culture-sorting institutions. Anthropology is also needed for its emphasis on the concrete and particular. As I have argued elsewhere (Erickson, 1977), there is a need for anthropologists to become more sophisticated in addressing issues of generalizability in their research. But for the field of educational research as a whole, there is a need to become more sophisticated about the particularizability of research -- of relating generalizable findings back into the case-specific situations of actual schools, children, and teachers in actual community settings. To the extent that the educational research and development community has suffered in the past from an underdifferentiated view of the particularizability of research findings and a paucity of studies which are high in particularizability as well as in generalizability, the distinctive research emphases of anthropology have a role to play in the future of educational research and development.

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